

# critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.  
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## New York Theatre Diary

Salvation on a String- Theatre De Lys 7/8/54. C.W. Christenberry, Jr and David B. Graham present three one act plays by Paul Green. Company includes Fred O'Neal, Evelyn Ellis, Diane Deering. Directed by Mr. Chris tenberry...Murder in Three Keys- Cherry Lane 7/8/54. Operatic trilogy of terror and suspense by Erik Chisholm presented by Punch Opera. Two are based on an O'Neill play and a Strindberg play... The Cretan Woman-Provincetown 7/7/54. Robinson Jeffers play with John Harkin, Charles Aldman, Barbara Waide.

## Current Theatre Reviews- Outdoor Week

Arabian Nights- Jones Beach Marine Theatre 6/24/54. Guy Lombardo's gigantic production won a set of mildly favorable notices from the drama and music critics who covered it. All agreed it was spectacular, pleasant, and a bit slow moving. Hope Holiday, a monster whale, Lauritz Melchior, and a set of vanishing water belles received top billing over the music by Carmen Lombardo and the book by George Marion, Jr. Several of the daily papers sent music critics to cover the opening instead of drama critics. Funke, Times, rated the entire proceedings worth a journey to Jones Beach, a pleasant mixture of songs, romance and the exoticism of the East. Beckley, Herald Tribune noted that between Mia Slavenska and the Ballet Theatre and the many other items there is much to keep the eyes busy. The show is a superlative cavalcade of show business, raved Coleman, Mirror. Impressive in size, constant delight to the eyes and ears, and packed with top stars, drama critic urges theatre fans to put it on their must list. News aisle sitter Chapman found it pleasant, but like all fabulous spectacles not as frisky as it might be. Most critics agreed book was far from funny. What production lacks in structure and plot it recovers in size, noted McClain, Journal American. He couldn't hear some of the leads lyrics.

Aquishow-Flushing Meadow Park Amphitheatre 6/22/54. Tenth annual edition of Elliott Murphy's outdoor entertainment was welcomed by all the drama reviewers who filed notices on combination water show, vaudeville show, ice show, etc. The entertainment, the price scale, and the nearness to NYC were all lauded. 1954's main new event is a Canadian log rolling team and the drama critics, to a man, gave them pre notices. Kerr, Herald Tribune, discovered that open air at Flushing is pleasant, and he also enjoyed Henny Youngman and the intermission fireworks. Chapman, News, suggests fans might beat the NY heat by staying in bed all day and spending all night at Flushing. A nice clean show where the whole family can cool off some hot evening is how Herridge, Post, summed up the proceedings.

## Summer Circuit

Margaret Truman's strabat debut in C.L. Anthony's Autumn Crocus which opened its ten week tour at Pocono, Pa, Playhouse was rated as fine by Clark, Variety. Though star still has plenty to learn about acting chores, trade critic thought she made her role of a shy Indiana school teacher genuine and heartwarming. He also noted she had a small voice and some words were not intelligible in all parts of the house.

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\* Off Broadway \*  
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Next season actors who participate in Off Broadway productions many new benefits under the new contract designed by Actors Equity. Union members will receive a minimum of \$30 per week, a raise of \$5 from the current rate. They will also receive a percentage of a given show's film, record and other possible rights.

Community Opera, Inc is presenting an unusual dinner-opera program at Town Hall Club, 123 West 43 on July 6-10. The Old Maid, The Thief and The Sunday Excursion will be presented. Dinner is from 6 to 7:30 PM. And the opera program starts at 8:15 PM. \$4.75 covers the cost of both.

Broadway Chapel Players first production of 1954-55 season will be a revival of Andre Obey's Noah. It will play 10 Sunday vespers service performances at 5 PM at Broadway Tabernacle Church, 56th St and Broadway starting Oct 3.

A modern dress version of Timon of Athens will be presented as the third production of the Ensemble repertory program opening in the fall at the Bijou.

Four new one act plays by American playwrights were presented at Central HS Auditorium, 225 W 24 by Joseph Ornato... The Early Primrose, a new play by William Earl, is playing nightly except Monday at Royal Playhouse, 83 E 4.

Freddie and his Fiddle is the first play of the children's summer series at WMA, 92 and Lexington.

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\* Vaudeville \*  
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Julia Cummings, night club singer, makes her Broadway debut in new Palace stage show. Others on bill include Johnny Morgan, Dorothy Kramer Dancers, Rex Weber, Senor Cortez, Rigoletto Bros, Bouncing Bodes, and the Five Amandis. Film is "Johnny Dark" with Tony Curtis.

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\* Theatre TV & Radio Notes \*  
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TV films of Helen Hayes at Falmouth Playhouse, Coonamassett, Mass., will be on NBC TV Dave Garroway morning show starting July 2...Jule Styne has been signed by CBS TV as producer of Ethel Merman TV shows. Plans are under way to have star in TV version of Annie Get Your Gun...Theatre Network Television talking with By The Beautiful Sea producers for a possible closed circuit TV performance of musical.

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\* Theatre Record Comments \*  
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The Girl in Pink Tights original cast album by Columbia was rated as worthwhile if only to hear Jeanmaire's untrained and unabashed voice cut through the spongy mass of lyrics with a clean thrust, decided Watt, New Yorker. Wilsch, Times, felt the same way about the French star and the current musical.

The Three Penny Opera original cast album by MGM is an excellent version of the opus presented at Theatre de Lys, rates Billboard's staff.

The Pajama Game original cast album by Columbia is much more memorable as a score as it seemed in the actual theatre, comments Wilson, Times. Disc also reduces Carol Haney, one of the major attractions of show, to a minor role.

The Golden Apple original cast album by Victor backs up Times record reviewer's original thought that show is one which fan goes out "humming the scenery". Jerome Moross' music becomes somewhat arid and monotonous when it is torn out of context.

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\* Theatre TV Comments \*  
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CBS TV "Shakespeare on TV" lectures by Dr. Frank Baxter of Univ Of Southern California heard on WCBS TV Sat at 2:45 PM deserves a better time period, comments Gould, Times. Economics of TV allow time for sponsored junk, but not for a sustaining jewel.

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' Green Room Department '  
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MINORITY PLEASURE...Theatre fans who worry about TV displacing theatre tend to forget the historic fact that the live drama is and always has been a minority pleasure, reminds Tynan, London Observer. There will always be those who like the exclusiveness in entertainment, and these are the true playgoing snobs, the backbone of the theatre who enjoy the sensation of privilege of admission behind locked doors to a limited assembly. To them, the English critic notes, TV can never appeal.

COLUMN TIPS...An exacting Broadway actor-director is secretly called Herr Commandant by his co-workers, whispers Wilson...Frank Sinatra is looking for a Broadway play or musical, hints Sobol.

GOOD THEATRE...Constructive suggestions for the fall season offered by Chapman, News, include going back to 8:30 PM curtains, ringing curtains up on time, getting wider lobby doors and more ticket takers, signing actors for full runs only, and not selling out houses to charity groups...Despite high production costs and taxation, Coleman, Mirror, believes the Broadway theatre did very well indeed this past season. Though NY musicals have won universal admiration and NY plays and comedies have been successful, diverse handicaps have prevented experimentation and the presentation of classics.

SUMMER FANS...The theatre, unlike NY, becomes even more alert and energetic in summer, though it flees to the hills, comments Sobol, Journal American. A citizen with a car or with train fare may view the best of our playwrights and producers offerings with star studded casts. The theatre, unlike the old soldier, neither dies nor fades away.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...No Broadway show can afford to be without a psychiatrist, surmises Kerr, Herald Tribune...A tax on TV admissions instead of on theatre admissions is backed by Sheaffer, Eagle...Every lover of the drama should rally to the standards of such non commercial groups as the NY City Center, the Phoenix, the Circle in the Square and the Ensemble, urges Coleman, Mirror...If Peter Pan with Mary Martin goes well in San Francisco it will be brought to NY, predicts Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...There are only a few male stars around because it is easier for women to stand out, Alfred Drake told Herridge, Post. Kismet star believes critics comment more on them, and press agents play up their notices more.

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' Pros & Cons by TMK '  
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Most of the worry about TV by theatre people has been a fear that somehow audiences would rather stay home and watch TV than venture out to see live actors in a theatre. Though no records are available one way or another, the general belief is that TV has effected theatre attendance little so far. A real worry that theatre fans and workers do not seem concerned about is the loss of top theatre talent to TV. No one can be against the payment of huge sums

to theatre workers for their TV services. But one can wonder how long it will take certain writers and directors to return to the live theatre. Lindsay and Crouse who usually have taken several years to write a play now find themselves obligated, for a price, to turn out 3 TV program formats in the next 90 days. A hit show running for years couldn't equal the amount of money they will earn in three months.

Theatre patrons who bought tickets for performances after July 1 will have to pay the 5% city admission tax even though they purchased their tickets before that date. Unless the NY County Supreme Court okays an injunction filed by the League of NY Theatres preventing the levy on advance sale. Managers predict much confusion as the tax must be paid on all tickets before entering the theatre. Variety suggested that the confusion may be so great that the producers may have to absorb the cost of the tax and pay it themselves.

#### Plays

Almanac closed...The Fifth Season closed for vacation and will open Aug 22 with two new stars...Ondine will close July 3...July 5 matinees include: Seven Year Itch, By the Beautiful Sea, Can-Can, Tea and Sympathy, Sabrina Fair, King of Hearts, Oh Men, Oh Women, Golden Apple, Kismet, Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker...All Summer Long will open Sept 23 at Coronet...July issue of "Seventeen" is devoted to "Young Theatre"... The Flowering Peach by Clifford Odets will open Oct. 15 at Morosco...Alvin will go to CBS TV when Golden Apple closes.

#### People

David Atkinson replaces Chris Robinson in Carousel, which is now selling seats through July 25...Virginia Brian and Richard Bowman replace Cathleen Nesbitt and Russell Collins in Sabrina Fair...Gemza de Lappe and Calvin Thomas replace Banbi Lynn and Daniel Reed in Carousel... "Non appearance insurance" issued by Federated Brokerage Group... "About Mrs. Leslie" film debut was for benefit of Actors Fund...Mike Todd reports he paid over \$1 million in taxes since 1948 and still owes \$270,000.

#### Summer Playhouses

Reunion '54 is new title of Justin Sturm play which Haila Stoddard will try out on strawhat circuit...The 13 Clocks and Trouble in Tahiti musicals will be tried out by Cheryl Crawford-David Brooks-Fred Sadoff...Producer Mike Ellis plays a role in My Three Angels production at Bucks County, Pa. Playhouse, Jerome Cowan starring.

#### Other Broadways

Saint Joan with Jean Arthur will open a 20 city tour Sept 16 in Hartford...Philadelphia Playhouse in Park series is doing so well that profits will be used to set up a "theatre-in-round" school with free acting classes and lectures...10th season of Hamlet at Elsinore, Denmark of Old Vic's opened with Richard Burton and Claire Bloom.

#### Theatre Film Notes

"Oklahoma" production stars filming July 14 near Tucson, Ariz. Cast includes Gordon MacRae as Curly, Gloria Grahame as Ado Annie, Jane Nelson as Will Parker, Charlotte Greenwood as Aunt Eller, Eddie Albert as Mr. Smith and Rod Steiger as Jud Fry.

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